

CATHOLIC ART QUARTERLY



THE CATHOLIC ART ASSOCIATION

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The Catholic Art Quarterly

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Art and Machines

by Paul Hanly Furfey

THE advent of the Machine Age has obviously destroyed a great many time-honored crafts. Our textiles are no longer woven on hand looms. Our shoes are not made by the village cobbler. Our books are the product of the printing press, not of the copyist and the illuminator. In the vast majority of fields the machine has taken the place of hand labor.

Since art is simply the right way of making things,¹ this vast change clearly has a great artistic significance. The workman who made things by hand had to face a number of technical problems and solve them personally. If he was successful, if he solved these problems rightly, then his product was literally a work of art, whether it was a pair of well-made shoes or a beautifully illuminated manuscript. Now that workmen no longer make shoes and books by hand, a great many artistic skills have died out.

What is to be done to supply the artistic loss occasioned by the disappearance of so many old crafts? First let us consider the common answer (which seems to me profoundly wrong) and then I shall propose the one answer which seems to me to be in accordance with correct artistic principles. The common answer is that we ought to restore the defunct or dying crafts and carry them on solely for art's sake. We ought to re-employ these old skills *uselessly* for the aesthetic satisfaction involved. This viewpoint was well expressed in a recent article by a group worker:

It is true that there is no present necessity of developing the skills that bring to light the real joy of work. We do not *have* to spin flax and weave cloth in order to have beautiful clothes. We do not *have* to design and execute, in intricate needlecraft, the rugs, curtains, and other decorations for our homes. If we do these things, today, we do them from choice and not from necessity.²

1 "Dicendum quod ars nihil aliud est quam ratio recta aliquorum operum faciendorum." St. Thomas, *Summa th.*, I-II, Q. 57, A. 3.

2 Chester G. Marsh, "Art Alone Enduring," *Girl Scout Leader*, 21 (no. 5): 6-7, May, 1944.

This is the familiar doctrine of art for art's sake. Under the inspiration of such a doctrine, of course, sound artistic work *can* be accomplished but it is not likely to be. For such art lacks a genuine motive. For example, why should one wish to weave textiles on a hand loom if, as the paragraph quoted seems to presuppose, equally good fabrics can be bought economically at a store? The only justification for hand-woven textiles is that they are better in quality or more satisfactory in design or more economical than machine-made goods. To weave without some such rational motive is merely to play at weaving. The man to whom a hand loom is only a plaything is not likely to be a very good artist.

The tradition of art for art's sake runs parallel with the cult of uselessness. Veblen noted the esteem in which "conspicuous leisure" is held; it is one of the marks of membership in a privileged social class. Such leisure, be it remarked, is not mere "indolence or quiescence." It is precisely "the non-productive consumption of time."³ To weave hand-loom fabrics in the twentieth century because one believes that they can thus be made better or more economically is justifiable and artistically promising. To weave them uselessly and merely for art's sake is a non-productive activity one of whose chief values is the exhibition of conspicuous leisure. So it is with many of the other arts and crafts which self-consciously artistic people would revive.

It is a very relevant fact that the cult of uselessness never has any appeal to genuine craftsmen. The medieval monk, illuminating a manuscript with painstaking care, would have been insulted if anyone had told him that his work served no useful purpose. To him it was necessary work. The book could not serve its purpose so well unless the spirit of the text was brought out by skillful illumination. So it is with valid art of whatever order. A good overcoat is one which efficiently protects the wearer from the weather. A good ecclesiastical mural is one which raises the spirit of the beholder to divine things, thus helping to make the church a place in which one may better worship God.

It ought to be clear from the foregoing that the problem of art in the Machine Age will not be solved by reviving defunct crafts merely in order to do by hand what may be done as well or better by machines. Viewed from the standpoint of true art, such a revival would be condemned by its mere uselessness. The cult of non-productiveness or of inefficient production is not the solution which we seek. What, then, is the solution? To answer this question it is necessary to recall the definition of art as the right way of making things. Art is simply that and nothing else. The definition says nothing about the use or non-use of machines. Some things are made *rightly* without the use of machines, as stone statues. Other things are made *rightly* with machines, as propellers for motor boats. In either case, if the *right* methods are used, the product is a work of art.

The problem of art in the Machine Age, therefore, is to be solved simply by making things *rightly*, either with machines or without them. To the tender minds of some aesthetes, it may seem shocking to assert that machine

3 Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (Modern library edition, New York, 1930), p. 43.

products can be works of art. But why not? Machine products can brilliantly exemplify the four artistic essentials with which Mr. Carey has familiarized us. Consider a propeller, for example. (1) It very efficiently fulfills its *purpose* of driving a boat through the water when it is rotated. (2) Its *material* is some alloy which long experimentation has found most suitable for its purpose. (3) The *Tools* by which it was made were machine tools designed with painstaking care for this particular product. (4) The *essential image* was created by some engineer on the basis of patient experiment and a profound knowledge of hydrodynamics. Only an intense and unreasoning prejudice against the machine could lead one to deny that a well-made propeller can be a work of art.

But granted that machine products can be, in some sense, works of art, can they be beautiful as well? In this connection it is worth our while to recall another dictum of Mr. Carey: "Beauty does not usually come to those who go directly after it, but to those who are intelligently in pursuit of something else, the perfection of their product."⁴ Therefore the engineers, designers, and skilled craftsmen who make things with machines are likely to stumble upon beauty if the perfection of their product is what they seek. Most unfortunately the purposes of these makers of things are often thwarted by the business men who employ their services and these business men are often prone to seek profit in the first instance and the perfection of their product only incidentally. This fact is one of the curses of the Machine Age. For well-made things are not always the most profitable. Often the business man can get rich more quickly by foisting on an uncritical public an article which is poorly made—and therefore unartistic and unbeautiful—by means of high pressure salesmanship and powerful advertising campaigns. But it is unfair to blame the ugliness of such products on the machines which make them. We all know only too well what ugly statues sculptors can turn out when lust for profit deadens their artistic conscience. Ugliness is not confined to machine-made products.

Commercial motives, however, do not always succeed in spoiling the beauty of machine-made products. Fortunately it is sometimes profitable for the manufacturer to seek perfection in the manufacture of his wares. This is likely to be the case, for example, when he sells to a discriminating clientele. Thus the users of precision instruments or of laboratory glassware are likely to demand, and receive, a high quality of product. Tools are frequently well-made, because tool-users can usually distinguish between good and poor workmanship. Under these circumstances, the perfection of the product being seriously sought, articles made by machine show that particular sort of goodness which is beauty. It is pleasing to examine them because we delight in seeing something rightly made, something well adapted to its end, something the unity of whose conception triumphantly expresses the maker's attainment of his purpose. Delight in its apprehension is the mark of a beautiful object.⁵

4 Graham Cary, "The Four Artistic Essentials," in *What Use Is Art Anyway* (Newport, John Stevens, 1937), p. 18.

5 "Sic patet quod pulchrum addit supra bonum quendam ordinem ad vim cognoscitivam; ita quod bonum dicatur id quod simpliciter complacet appetitui; pulchrum autem dicatur id cuius ipsa apprehensio placet." St. Thomas, *summa th.*, I-II, Q. 27, A. 1, ad zum.

The advent of the Machine Age destroyed many old crafts; but it also created many new ones which center around the machine. Instead of a nostalgic regret for the dead and dying crafts, we should have an intelligent appreciation for the new ones which have arisen. The chief obstacle to this appreciation is a snobbish disdain for productive toil and the cult of uselessness. The aesthete can appreciate hand-loom weaving because it can be useless; to cultivate such a craft is to proclaim one's membership in the leisure class. The craft of the machinist is useful and therefore despicable. Artists wear smocks, not overalls.

To fail to appreciate the artistry of the machine shop is unintelligent and snobbish. A good machinist can be an artist of a high order. To illustrate this fact, consider the life of Henry Maudslay (1771-1831), a man whose influence on history is far greater and far more beneficial than that of his contemporary, Napoleon. Maudslay was perhaps the most brilliant of the group of English inventors who developed modern machine tools during the latter part of the eighteenth, and the early part of the nineteenth centuries, a group which included Joseph Bramah, Sir Samuel Bentham, Sir Marc Isambard Brunel, Matthew Murray, James Fox, and Maudslay's pupils, Joseph Clement, Richard Roberts, Sir Joseph Whitworth, and James Nasmyth.⁶ To appreciate the importance of these men in modern history, consider what a large proportion of the things we use are manufactured by machine tools or by machines which are themselves made by machine tools!

Henry Maudslay was born in Woolwich and at the age of twelve he began to work at the arsenal there. By the time he was fifteen he had gravitated to the blacksmith's shop and by the time he was eighteen his superb craftsmanship had not only made him the hero of the shop but had given him a reputation which had spread as far as London. When Joseph Bramah of the latter city needed someone to develop machine tools to manufacture a new lock which he had invented, the eighteen-year-old Maudslay was recommended to him. In spite of his youth the boy was hired. The foreman of the shop, however, was a bit sceptical about the ability of one who had served no regular apprenticeship. Maudslay accepted the implied challenge and offered to demonstrate his ability by repairing a worn-out vice which he saw in the shop. The proposition was accepted. Maudslay at once took the vice apart, rehardened and tempered the jaws, trued them up, cleaned and repaired all the parts and by six o'clock the old vice had become the best and trimmest in the shop. There was no more argument about the boy's ability!

After serving with distinction for some years in Bramah's shop, Maudslay left to set up his own business, later taking in a partner and founding the firm of Maudslay & Field. The firm soon gained a high reputation for the extraordinary excellence of its work. "One of the things in which Mr. Maudslay

⁶ The best accounts of the lives and work of these men are, Samuel Smiles, *Industrial Biography* (Boston, Ticknor and Fields, 1864) and J. W. Roe, *English and American Tool Builders* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1926). See also the respective articles in the *Dictionary of National Biography* (reissue, London, Smith, Elder, 1908-9).

took just pride," says Smiles, "was in the excellence of his work. In designing and executing it, his main object was to do it in the best possible style and finish, altogether irrespective of the probable pecuniary results."⁷ Excellent craftsmanship became a tradition. The extreme skill of Maudslay himself set the pace. One of his old workmen testified to this: "It was a pleasure to see him handle a tool of any kind, but he was *quite splendid* with an eighteen-inch file!"⁸ Nasmyth, who worked under him, adds his confirmation and testifies that Maudslay could file a surface so true that it was never found defective when tested with a standard plane surface.⁹ The reader should remember the extreme need of such manual skill in the early days of tool building. Modern machine tools are made by other machine tools; but the *first* machine tools obviously had to be made by hand.

Maudslay is remembered principally for his improvement of the lathe by adding the slide-rest. This had been known previously, but it was he who first combined it with change gears and a power-driven lead screw. He thus established a principle which is applied in some way or other in almost every modern machine tool. It would be irrelevant in this article to detail his other inventions—which were many. The point now under discussion is his craftsmanship rather than his inventive genius and the former seems to have been no less remarkable than the latter. His reputation spread and it was the ambition of every young mechanic to be employed in Maudslay's shop. James Nasmyth, the inventor of the steam-hammer, tells us that this was his feeling as he grew up in Edinburgh. "It was the summit of my ambition to get work in that establishment."¹⁰ To gain his object the young Nasmyth made a small steam engine, casting and forging all the parts himself. Then he brought it to London and showed it to the great Maudslay. The older man immediately recognized the craftsmanship of the younger and gave him the coveted position at once. Young machinists looked on Maudslay's shop as young artists regard the atelier of some famous master—and for the same reason.

It is not altogether absurd to argue that the net effect of the so-called Industrial Revolution¹¹ benefited craftsmanship rather than the reverse. First of all, it has multiplied the number and variety of manufactured objects. Whatever skills are involved in the design, production, and repair of automobiles, radios, airplanes, electric generators, turbines, and machine tools are the creation of the Industrial Revolution. Secondly, the new crafts are often ones which call for a very high order of intelligent manual dexterity. Who would dare to assert that the making of a modern turbine requires less craftsmanship than the making of a medieval water wheel?

One dogma which is never questioned by self-consciously artistic people is the dogma that the Industrial Revolution has substituted drudgery for

7 Smiles, *op. cit.*, p. 280.

8 Smiles, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

9 Quoted by Roe, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

10 Quoted by Smiles, *op. cit.*, p. 338.

11 Actually it was an evolution rather than a revolution. See H. L. Beales, "The Industrial Revolution," *History*, N. S., 14:125-29, July, 1929.

craftsmanship. The example which is given over and over again is the workman on an automobile assembly line whose sole duty is to insert a certain bolt as the chassis moves past him. Admittedly this is a degrading sort of drudgery and unworthy of a human being; but the manufacture of automobiles is really not as simple as that. Even in a prewar Ford factory only a small percentage of the workers were employed on assembly lines. The manufacture of automobiles involves a great variety of jobs, requiring all degrees of skill from the most intelligent craftsmanship down to the merest drudgery.

Before the Industrial Revolution the demands of industry were similarly variegated. In the Middle Ages, for example, there were guilds here and there which fostered craftsmanship of a very high order. The members of these guilds who manufactured their product with high skill and meticulous honesty are one of the great glories of art history. But not all medieval work was like that. The serf had only a small share in the joy of creative craftsmanship. "A bond servant," said Bartholomew the Englishman, "suffereth many wrongs, and is beat with rods, and constrained and held low with diverse and contrary charges and travails among wretchedness and woe. Unneth he is suffered to rest or to take breath. And therefore among all wretchedness and woe the condition of bondage and thralldom is most wretched."¹² There were drudges in the thirteenth century as well as in the twentieth and the modern drudge has at least personal freedom and a short working day.

In the Machine Age, as in other ages, a minority of people will continue to occupy themselves seriously with the "fine" arts such as painting and sculpture; but the vast majority will find an outlet for their artistic impulses in craftsmanship. The encouragement of craftsmanship is therefore the most feasible way of spreading the spirit of art among the people. In the twentieth century a wide variety of crafts are being practiced. There are, in the first place, many crafts which have survived unchanged in their essentials from before the Industrial Revolution. Such are cookery and needlework for women, and carpentry, bricklaying, and stone masonry for men—to mention only a few examples. But other crafts, such as that of the machinist, have been born in modern times. It is foolish to despise these new crafts simply because they do not have the romantic values of hoary traditions. To despise them is the same species of mistake as to build a modern bank building which tries to look like a Greek temple. It is pure bourgeois snobbishness.

The Catholic Art Association can render a great service to the cause of art if it helps people to see beauty in machine products—automobiles and airplanes, for example—as well as in the products of pure handcraft. The consummate skill of a great machinist deserves the same sort of respect and appreciation as the skill of a great medieval copyist. The copying and illumination of manuscripts can have a splendor of its own, but a man can also be quite splendid with an eighteen-inch file or—for that matter—with a milling machine.

12 *Mediaeval Lore of Bartholomew the Englishman* quoted in Bede Jarrett, *Social Theories of the Middle Ages* (Boston, Little, Brown, 1926), p. 106. The work dates from about 1250.

The Formal Cause

by Sister Matthias, O. P.

PURPOSE plus agent plus material plus form equals art. So said Aristotle, and so says St. Thomas—in much better, philosophical language. This means that to produce a work of art there must be a mind with an end in view, a body to work with, some material to manipulate, and a mental creation, a spiritual being begotten in the mind, a “word” spoken by it (as the Eternal Word is spoken by the Father!)

In order to isolate this last and loftiest of the causes of art—the mental creation—let us suppose that we have a man with the seemingly worthy end in view of reproducing on canvas some panoramic view of nature he has seen, because to him “the heavens show forth the glory of God and the firmament declares the work of His Hands.” To accomplish this purpose, the man has skilled hands to work with and tools of a scientific perfection as yet undreamed of; he has pigment and canvas to delight his discriminating mind and hands. Will he necessarily produce a work of art? No. The art equation calls for form.

We are purposely isolating form, therefore, and setting it aside for examination. We cannot have art until it is added. Too often form is forgotten or unknown, and the man spoken of above walks in the flesh, and has set out to produce with incomplete causality for true art. That is why, in our schools, we have exercises, copy upon copy, and no art!

It is the province of this paper to delve more deeply into this formal cause of art.

We must first of all distinguish the beauty of artistic creation from the beauty of nature. The product of art is beautiful in virtue of its formal element, not in virtue of its truth of representation. In other words, the painted landscape must have something which the real landscape has not—and that because it has been breathed upon by the spirit of man, whom God has “set over all His works.” It was St. Augustine’s idea that the artist brought things to a perfection they could not attain in nature: “Matter,” he said, “is redeemed as it were by the form incarnated in it, and nature is transformed and lifted up to a higher existence.” It is the artist’s concern to apprehend “form amidst the flux and impermanence of phenomena. He sees the all pervasive permanencies that forms reveal.” An art without form will never “attain being.”¹ And Maritain says, “. . . if the joy produced by a work of beauty proceeds from some truth . . . it proceeds from the perfection with which the work expresses or manifests form, in the metaphysical sense of the word.” For, he adds elsewhere, “form . . . is above all the peculiar principle of intelligibility, the peculiar clarity of everything.”²

1 Chapman, *St. Augustine's Philosophy of Beauty*, p. 76, 84, 85.

2 Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, p. 59, 24.

It is interesting to follow this idea of the "clarity" of form through philosophical literature. It was touched upon by all the Ancients: *splendor veri*, said the Platonists; *splendor ordinis*, said St. Augustine; *splendor formae*, said St. Thomas."³ Plotinus says: "The simple beauty of a color is caused by a form triumphing over what is obscure in matter, and the presence of an incorporeal light which is reason and form."⁴

The relation of light to form is remarked by a contemporary poet in these words:

"There was no form to creation until God gave his first command to earth and said, 'Let there be light.' So form of all substance came into being."⁵

And the word of Infinite Art and Wisdom, spoken by the Father, is called the "Light" of the World. ". . . The Word, since He proceeds from the knowledge of the Father, is the eternal brightness of God."⁶

We must pause next to explain the meaning of the word *form* as used here. I use it in the same sense as Aristotle when he said, "By form I mean the essence of each thing and its primary substance."⁷ St. Augustine said of form that things have being insofar as they possess form: "Without form things could not be in any way whatsoever . . . It is not matter which makes a body, but form."⁸ Maritain calls it a "secret principle of intelligibility shining forth." Eric Gill says of it that it is "the principle which determines a thing in its species."¹⁰

But by the 18th century, says Hamm, form means to Hegel "the material configuration or concrete presentation of 'idea'."¹¹ And it is in this sense that the modern aesthetician accepts the term.

Moreover there are even those who interpret St. Thomas's effulgence of form as a material quality: "It is easy to think of the gold and lapis blue in the mosaics and illuminations of manuscripts as concrete examples of this aesthetic splendor."¹² But Maritain insists on its spiritual meaning: "Above all it is the profound splendour of the soul shining through, of the soul which is the principle of life and animal energy, or the principle of spiritual life, of pain and passion." And again: "The more highly developed a man's culture becomes, the more spiritual grows the brilliance of the form which ravishes him."¹³

HOW do works of art attain form? Not through the *copying* of nature that Plato conceived as art. Plato established three levels of being:

1. the ideas or forms of things.
2. the physical actualities of these forms existing in the world.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 24.

4 *Enneades*, I, 6, 2.

5 Coffin, *The Substance that is Poetry*, p. 140.

6 Tyciak, *Life in Christ*, p. 41.

7 *Metaphysics*, Bk. VII, Ch. 7.

8 Chapman, *Op. Cit.*, p. 26.

10 Gill, *Beauty Looks after Herself*, p. 1.

11 Hamm, *Form in Literature, Thought, XVII*, 65, June 1942, p. 256.

12 Gilbert and Kuhn, *The History of Esthetics*, p. 141.

13 Maritain, *Op. Cit.*, p. 28, 25.

3. the shadows of these objects. (This St. Augustine refutes by saying that likenesses and images are not just appearances or shadows, but that they have a real existence by virtue of the self-subsistent Likeness and Image from which they get their existence.)¹⁴

Craftsmen, he said, deal with the second order in making three dimensional objects; painters and poets deal with the third in that they make only images of the things on the second level.¹⁵ He says their works are like reflections in a mirror in which, if you turn it, "you will speedily produce the sun and all the things in the sky, and speedily the earth and yourself and the other animals and implements and plants."¹⁶ It is this kind of maker that an artist is, if indeed one could call him a maker at all, says Plato.¹⁷ He teaches that there are two classes of things produced by man, and the representations of these objects in art. These images can again be subdivided into those that bear a likeness to the original and those that are not faithful representations.¹⁸

What Plato misses is the point brought out by Maritain that art is imitation, but insists that it imitates a spiritual form, not physical appearance: "But if the joy produced by a work of beauty proceeds from some truth, it does not proceed from the truth of imitation as a reproduction of things, it proceeds from the perfection with which the work expresses or manifests form . . . it proceeds from the truth of imitation as manifestation of form. There is the formal element of imitation in art . . . There the joy of imitation in art is brought to bear."¹⁹ To give an example of this imitation of the *spiritual* form rather than that of physical appearance; Chesterton tells us in his inimitable way that he went out into a field to draw. "When a cow came slouching by in the field next to me, a mere artist might have drawn it." Not Chesterton! "I drew the soul of the cow; which I saw there walking plainly before me in the sunlight; and the soul was all purple and silver, and had seven horns and the mystery that belongs to all beasts."²⁰

For Plato, of course, all things were mere shadows of their forms, which existed outside them. Beothius expresses Plato's doctrine thus:

"From those forms which are outside matter come the forms which are in matter and produce bodies. We misname the entities that reside in the bodies when we call them forms; they are mere images; they only resemble those forms which are not incorporate in matter."²¹

And St. Augustine was a Christian Platonist:

"Form exists in two ways: in the thing and in God. In the mind of God, forms, not having been formed, are eternal and unchanging. These principal forms or divine ideas or rea-

14 Chapman, *Op. Cit.*, p. 34, 35.

15 Gilbert and Kuhn, *Op. Cit.*, p. 27.

16 *Republic*, Bk. X, 596 c.

17 *Sophist*, 234.

18 Gilbert and Kuhn, *Op. Cit.*, p. 33.

19 Maritain, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 59, 60.

20 Chesterton, *Tremendous Trifles*, pp. 11, 12.

21 *De Trinitate*, II.

sons are neither born nor do they pass away, but everything which comes to be or passes away is said to take form from the forms, which do not change. These forms, ideas, or reasons are the fixed and immutable essences of things. Things exist both in their eternal ideas in the Divine Intelligence, and in themselves and their own proper natures. This double existence is simultaneous."²²

Would St. Augustine hold for the double existence of forms in the production of art also—that is, that the form of an artistic creation is in the mind of the artist simultaneously with its existence in the work?

Hamm says: "True inner form, the substantial form of a work of art *is* the idea, the intention, the said as saying, the man himself. To recall the classic expression of Newman, 'Style is a thinking out into language'." And again, "His form is the form of his work. His soul is its soul."²³

The synthesis of these two extremes of the separate existence of form in mind and form in matter on the one hand; and of their complete identity on the other, seems to lie in St. Thomas:

"God knows things not only as existing in themselves but also as existing in their causes . . . for He knows the relation between cause and effect. Now the products of art are in the craftsman, through the intellect and will of the craftsman, even as natural things are in their causes through the powers of the causes: for, just as natural things liken their effects to themselves by their active powers, so the craftsman by his intellect gives his handiwork the form whereby it is likened to his art."²⁴

The likeness that St. Thomas mentions here is interesting to study.

St. Augustine discusses likeness and says that things have a double likeness: the likeness of their constitutive parts, and their likeness to God. An image is distinguished from this. It is a species of likeness, but its essence is to be an expressed likeness.²⁵ Of image St. Augustine says that there are two kinds:

"An image may be of the same substance as its begetter, as in the case of a son who is the image of his father, or it may not be of the same substance, as in the case of a painting which is the image of the idea in the artist who begets it. When the likeness adequately expresses that of which it is the image, it realizes a perfect likeness and equality . . . Such a perfect image can only be found in God the Son, who is the perfect expression and image of the Father."²⁶

22 Chapman, *Op. Cit.*, p. 28.

23 Hamm, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 264, 265.

24 *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I. Ch. LXVIII.

25 De Genesi ad. Lit. Lib. Imperfectus, XVI.

26 Chapman, *Op. Cit.*, p. 34.

Does the image always adequately express the original idea? These artists testify to the contrary: Dante said that the material element was sometimes deaf in responding.²⁷ Cezanne complained of his incapacity to "realize" and exclaimed: "Don't you see . . . the outline keeps escaping me." Francois Mauriac, writing of Christ and the miracle of the loaves and fishes, says that Christ was "irritated" by the blindness of the mob in failing to see that this was just a type of something greater to come. Then he adds, "An artist knows something of this irritation when praise is given his sketches which fall so far short of the masterpiece he carries in his heart."²⁸

But Eric Gill says that there is no such thing as the bad execution of a good picture.

"For the execution of the thing is our only means of knowing it The maker himself does not fully know his own conception until he has executed it, and the man in the street cannot know it at all until he sees the work before him. The relation between the image in the mind of the maker and the executed work is one of more or less complete identity."²⁹

ALL this discussion having arisen from Plato, we now go back to see what Aristotle says of how works of art attain form. "From art proceed the things of which the form is in the soul of the artist."³⁰ All things are composed of matter and form. The matter of the artist's creation must pre-exist; so must the form; since anything which is produced is produced by something and from something.³¹ But for an artist to make something it is "quite unnecessary to set up a Form (Platonic)³² as a pattern the begetter is adequate to the making of the product and to the causing of the form in matter."³³

Is this form in the soul of the artist begotten of pure spirit or is it generated from material perception? St. Thomas gives it a half-way place—inasmuch as man must depend upon material reality for art.

"To go from one extreme to the other it is necessary to pass through the middle. Now the nature of form in the imagination, which form is without matter but not without material conditions, stands midway between the nature of a form which is in matter and the nature of a form which is in the intellect by abstraction from matter and from material conditions."³⁴

It is likewise possible to consider form in the imagination relatively as dependent on matter when compared with the creative ideas of God, or as preceding things when compared with causalities of a lower order. Dietrich Von Hildebrand

27 *Divina Commedia*, Paradiso, I, 1, 1, 127-128.

28 Mauriac, *Life of Jesus*, p. 102.

29 Gill, *Art*, p. 15.

30 *Metaphysics*, Bk. VII, ch. 7.

31 *Ibid.* ch. 8.

32 (Parentheses my own).

33 *Metaphysics*, ch. 8.

34 *Summa Theologica*, I. Q. 55, A. 2.

does this when he makes the distinction between the "genitum" and "factum" of the *Credo* and applies it here: "This distinction is the *causa exemplaris* of two forms of becoming throughout all the created world The divine 'factum' is a 'genitum' in reference to all causality to be found in the sphere of the *causae secundae*."³⁵ But he attributes "genitum" to a man's artistic creation when compared with the construction of a machine.

Insisting that our art ideas are creative, Maritain says: "The idea of the artist . . . is an idea formative of things and not formed by them."³⁶

Several writers hasten to remind him that our ideas are not the ideas of God, and that they necessarily bespeak the pre-existence of matter:

"For God, to create and to form are one and the same thing; but for man these two must be distinguished. In the strict sense of the word, man cannot create, but he can illuminate with form a matter already in existence; only God can bring matter and form into existence from nothingness."³⁷

Charles Hart attributes much to the sense experience of the artist:

"The overflowing of the artist's experience as his artist's expression is a hearing of voices and a seeing of visions from a much deeper reality than that of the rest of us ordinary observers. Here is no ordinary country possessed of the well-known modes of communication of philosopher and scientist."³⁸

Maritain himself agrees that our ideas are buried in matter:

". . . The spiritual germ which impregnates our art . . . floundering in matter, is, so far as we are concerned, a mere atom of divinity hardly glimpsed, obscure to our own eyes, raising and irradiating the dough of sense."³⁹

St. Augustine adds much weight to the cause of the dependence of our ideas upon matter when he identifies form with number (which presupposes matter):

"Look upon the firmament, the earth, the sea, and whatever in them shines from above, or creeps beneath, or flies or swims; they have forms because they have numbers: take away these things from them, and they will be nothing. From what, therefore, are they unless from Him from Whom number is; since existence is to them in proportion as they are

35 Hildebrand, *Op. Cit.*,

36 Maritain, *Op. Cit.*, p. 89.

37 Chapman, *Op. Cit.*, p. 28.

38 Hart, "Place of Aesthetics in Philosophy," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, No. 6.

39 Maritain, *Op. Cit.*, p. 89.

numbered? And, too, human artisans of all corporeal forms have numbers in their art to which they adapt their works: hands and instruments move in working, until that which is formed without, referred to that light of number which is within, obtains completion insofar as is possible, and is pleasing to the internal judge gazing upon supernatural numbers through the interpreting sense.

“Seek, then, what moves the members of the artisan himself; it will be number: for those also are moved numerically. And if you withdraw work from the hands, and from the soul the intention of making, and that movement of the member be referred to pleasure, it will be called dancing. Seek, therefore what gives pleasure in dancing: number will make answer to you: ‘Behold it is I.’ Examine now the beauty of the formed body; numbers are confined in place. Examine the beauty of movement in a body; numbers are whirled about in time. Enter into the art whence these proceed, seek in it time and place; at no time will it be, at no place will it be; nevertheless number lives in it; its region is not of spaces, nor is its age of days; and nevertheless when they who wish to become artists apply themselves to the learning of art, they move their body through places and times, but their soul through times; with the increase of time to be sure they become more skilled.

“Transcend, therefore, the soul also of the artisan in order that you may see everlasting number; now wisdom shall shine upon you from the interior seat itself and from the very inner chamber of truth: if she repel your still too languid gaze, carry back the eye of the mind to that way where she shows herself cheerfully. Remember well that you have deferred a vision which you, become stronger and more healthy, may again seek.”⁴⁰

To sum this up in the words of Gilbert and Kuhn:

“The art of the maker consists in a certain state of the spirit a possession of numbers which as it were beat time like an orchestral leader, for the shaping of the images and the motions of the muscles. The artist sees within the inner light put there by God, and the effects of this light are extrinsicated by him into wood or stone or string or stretched skin. The light and number by which the artist works are an immortal part in him. The intention of the artist, though it moves his members and the wood or stone, it is itself immovable, and is outside the flux of time. God is the artist of na-

40 Chapman, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 25, 26.

ture, and the human artist follows in his ways . . . except that he is limited by the conditions of his material medium, as God the All-Powerful is not."⁴¹

Someone has quoted the Bible to substantiate this theory of St. Augustine:

"So doth the potter sitting at his work, turning the wheel about with his feet, who is always carefully set to his work, and making all this work by number."⁴²

The truth however probably lies in the "via media" of Aristotle, and this Maritain expresses when he says that the idea of the artist is neither purely of spirit nor purely of matter:

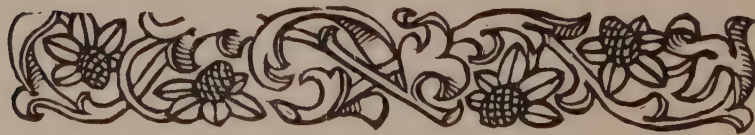
"It is a simple view, although virtually very rich in multiplicity, of the work to be done, apprehended in the individual soul, a view which is as it were a spiritual germ or seminal reason of the work . . . concerning not only the intelligence but also the imagination and the sensibility of the artist, answering a certain unique shade of emotion and sympathy, and therefore inexpressible in concepts. What painters call their vision of things plays an essential part therein."⁴³

THIS is what form is, and it is essential that it perform its function when a masterpiece is being made. You cannot have a product of art without setting to work the hands of an artist; but neither can you have one unless the artist's spirit is operative—unless he is using his great creative powers and saying, as God did when He designed the universe, "Let there *be*" It is being which is the distinctive mark of art, and this being is endowed by the form which is engendered in the human mind when it remolds the stuff of nature and sets upon it its own mark.

41 Gilbert and Kuhn, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 158, 159.

42 *Ecclesiasticus*, XXXVIII, 32.

43 Maritain, *Op. Cit.*, p. 182.





ALTAR IN SAINT JOHN'S ABBEY CHAPEL

Monte Cassino and the Reform of Sacred Art

by Anthony Unterhofer, O. S. B.

WHEN through the permissive will of God, the torrent of allied bombs rained down total destruction on the proto-abbey of Monte Cassino on February 15 of this year, no one in this country was perhaps more personally concerned about the fate of an outstanding work of sacred hieratic art than a humble Benedictine lay brother, Brother Clement Frischau, of St. John's Abbey in Minnesota. With the destruction of the ancient church and monastery on the heights of Cassino were destroyed, in a few hours, the results of fourteen years of Brother Clement Frischau's efforts in the task of beautifying the Crypt of the Cassino Basilica, with an art that was truly sacred and hieratic. Less than a month after this unhappy and, as was subsequently demonstrated, all too hasty annihilation of the abbey as a military stronghold, Brother Clement's talented hands were folded in death to await a "New Temple, not made with human hands," full of the beauty of the Word Incarnate.

The death of Brother Clement at St. John's Abbey, where he had come to spend the last ten years of active life, leaves but two survivors of the original group of artist priests and lay brothers who, some fifty years ago, gathered around the magnetic character of Peter Lenz in southern Germany for the purpose of developing a religious art opposed to the decadent realism of the previous decades. In 1872, an artist-sculptor, Peter Lenz, having finished his technical art training at the Art Academy of Munich and several years of teaching of art in Nuernberg, came to visit the newly established Benedictine Monastery of Beuron, South Germany, and offered his services to the community. The old monastery building, formerly the property of a princess of Hohenzollern, was generously donated in 1862 to the learned Benedictine Brothers, Maurus and Placidus Wolter, with a view to re-establishing the Order in Germany. Much work had to be done to make the old buildings suitable for a new community, so the proposal that Peter Lenz made was warmly welcomed.

In his experience as an art student in Munich (1850-1859) Peter Lenz had reached the conviction, that religious art at that time was being swerved from its true purpose. The artists in Munich, professors as well as pupils, with few exceptions were little concerned about the supernatural in religion, and what they produced in church painting could not truly be called sacred art. Lenz, in his search for a new and truly religious style, found inspiration in the Glyptothek of Munich, where some important Greek sculptures of the archaistic period ("The Aeginetes") were exhibited; and later, while pursuing further studies in Rome and Berlin, he found that the ancient Egyptians have a genuinely religious, monumental, and hieratic art carefully preserved through the centuries. Inspired by these proto-types, and desirous of reforming the, to him,

decadent forms of modern religious art, Peter Lenz, as yet a layman, was planning to start an art group or "school", in which not only artistic, but also religious training would be emphasized. He saw the basic inconsistency of trying to produce a truly Christian art without living the life of a Christian.

At first, therefore, he toyed with the idea of founding a community of artists who would bind themselves by the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience to a life devoted to religion and art, living within an enclosure, so that nothing and nobody could disturb the steadfast pursuit of this double work. A rigid daily schedule was to set apart ample time for religious devotions and theological training under the guidance of a priest. This plan, however, was never carried out as conceived; for with the spiritual perspective gained with the passing years, Lenz was able to embody this idea of a laymen-artists'-community into the already existing religious community of Beuron.

He joined the Order of St. Benedict at Beuron, first as an Oblate, later as a lay brother, and was henceforth known by his religious name of P. Desiderius Lenz (1876). This step proved to be exactly right to Brother Desiderius, inasmuch as the responsibility for the religious training was lifted from his shoulders and placed on those of the Abbot, so that when the Beuronese congregation expanded over Germany, Austria, and Belgium, Brother Desiderius received more pupils and helpers for his art work than he could have hoped for had he been alone in organizing his artists' community.

In 1899, the task of completely rebuilding the Crypt of the Basilica on Monte Cassino was entrusted to P. Desiderius Lenz and his fellow workers, P. Adalbert Gresnicht, P. Willibrord Verkade, the spiritual director, and Brother Clement Frischauf, and their assistants. Here, at the cradle of the order founded in 543 A. D., they began their work of love in 1900, so that upon its completion in 1914, it had become an international show-place, for the whole world was interested in the success of the venture. The late Emperor William II of Germany paid a visit to the Abbey, talked with Brother Desiderius and his fellow-artists, and donated a large sum for the purpose. Prominent Churchmen and laymen, artists and scholars of the whole world were witnesses to the progress of the work.

The style and character of the hieratic and monumental art espoused by P. Desiderius Lenz and his fellow-workers has popularly and unfortunately somewhat narrowly been labeled "Beuronese" art, from its place of origin; this has evoked varied reactions on the part of art-conscious individuals ranging all the way from extreme enthusiasm for it to a sweeping condemnation of everything that savors of its formalism. In order to obtain a truly objective evaluation of the worth and place of this modern reform in the history of sacred art, a glance at the aims and principles of the art of the workers of Beuron is essential. First, it is to be noted that since it aims at a hieratic purpose, this art-style is strictly religious and liturgical, the visual companion of Gregorian chant, which is also exclusively sacred and liturgical. Consequently, it makes no effort to appeal to the human senses and emotions as realism does; it appeals primarily to the intellect of man, it strives to elevate the human soul into the

sphere of the supernatural—that of awe, adoration, worship, reverence. Its effect is not violently dramatic, with the feeling of unrest and clamor, but rather static, serene, so that everything seems to be “sub specie aeternitatis”—in eternal contemplation.

To achieve this other-worldly character in their art, the monks intentionally emphasized essentials, and intentionally disregarded minor details in the compositions and figures, stylizing them after the manner of the ancient prototypes. As one writer expresses it: “if we consider the characteristics of this art, we detect in it, at a glance, Egyptian, Greek, Medieval, and Modern influence. From the Egyptian, it has the formal, symmetrical arrangement of figures and color; from the Greeks, the grace and dignity of lines; from the Medieval, the epic representation of events; and from the Modern, the symbolism and suggestion of ideas.” In spite of this eclecticism, the same writer emphasizes the fact that the artist-monks of Beuron amalgamated all these ideals, “to form a new language which is simple enough to be understood by a child and at the same time profound enough to give ample food-stuff to the greatest scholar.

The unifying principle is deep faith—in fact, the contemplation of the monk. As such, it has six outstanding qualities. It is sublime and objective, idealistic, simple, dignified, and monumental. It is sublime, because it is the art of the sanctuary. It shares the sacred functions and treats only of the wondrous gifts of God and of His love, never concerning itself with trivialities. It neither disregards nor adores nature, but centers its whole attention upon the Divine Creator, the Eternal Artist. By omitting all that savors of passion, it becomes the very antithesis of the art which glorifies the sensual. In it, the human body is spiritualized to such an extent that it becomes angelic in appearance, that it is merely the necessary medium by which to represent graphically a spirit nature.

The art of Beuron is objective, for liturgical art must necessarily be epic in character. It is a sister to sacred music, which is meant rather for the ear of God, than for the ear of man. Private prayer may have lyrical, subjective elements, but liturgical art partakes of the solid qualities of the public prayer of the Church, of the Divine Office. It does not stir the emotions, but incites the faithful to contemplate the sublime truths and to pay reverence to the Deity. Beuron art is idealistic, for it seeks to convey an idea. It aims rather to represent the spiritual significance, the divine mystery which lies behind the historical event than to portray its historical details. For this reason it calls for cooperation on the part of the beholder. It calls for meditation. The characters of this art form, their movements, postures, are but a curtain behind which lies a deep spiritual essence. They are purposely *abstract* form, devoid of striking individualistic traits, so that the beholder is spontaneously elevated into an endless expanse of a higher world. The method employed in accomplishing this, brings us to the other characteristics of this art form, those of dignity and simplicity. Because every figure of Beuron art preaches the victory of spirit over flesh, perfect control of body by the soul, there are no passionate, useless movements.

Finally, Beuron art is monumental, since the real place for liturgical art is the wall of the Church. Like the Egyptian artists, the artist-monks of Beuron were not interested in creating an elaborate background or perspective, which might feign depth upon a flat surface. This would be both unnatural as well as unessential for the conveying of purely spiritual ideas. The pictures must harmonize with the architecture and must be adapted to the allotted surface space. They must have rhythm and correspond to the rest of the pillared structure like an antiphon to a psalm. The figures themselves must bear a relation to the size of the building and be sometimes of colossal dimensions lest they appear weighted down by the rest of the structure."¹

In this connection, it is important to observe that in this country, our familiarity with the art of Beuron has been almost exclusively limited to small holy cards depicting either only a single or at most a few figures isolated and torn from their natural locale, that of a wall of a monumental building such as a church, and therefore cannot give us a true impression of the objective worth of this form of treatment.² Viewed thus, in their natural setting, the works of the artists of Beuron are said, by Reverend Joseph Kreitmaier, S. J., to have "an individuality, perhaps better said, a spirituality which was never intended for the great market of the world, but for the mystic seclusion of the sanctuary, and only those who are spiritual can understand it. Other types of art, be they secular or religious—have an aesthetic appeal to the *heart*, to the emotions of the observer, but Beuron art is to satisfy the spirit, the soul. The one is the art *from* which man *receives* something from the artist, the *other* is the art *through* which man *gives* something to God."³

The representation of the human figure was a special problem for P. Desiderius and his artists. For many years it was his untiring effort to give the human figure an architectural form, monumental and mural in character; as he called it the "canon" of the ideal human figure based on simple geometric proportions. This plan or expedient was expected to replace a study of anatomy, as well as to replace the customary endless technical studies from life, so that the young artists could use their talents and time for furthering the totality of the conceptions of the master design. Here too, lies the great distinction between Beuronese art and the rules which were respected for centuries. While in all other styles the cult of the individual is uppermost (in which an artist is great only through his own personality, distinct from other personalities) the Beuronese school of art required of an artist that he renounce his own style and taste and to conform to the rules of his mentor and master. It is evident that such a policy is directly in opposition to the modern heresy of exaggerated and blatant individualism, in which the cult of personal and individual expression is supreme. P. Desiderius saw that it would be difficult for any artist imbued with such individualism to work in harmony with like

1 Beaumer Kunst, Heder & Company.

2 The Church of St. Anselm in Bronx, New York City, and the Abbey Church of St. John's, Collegeville, are the two only edifices in the United States having Beuron interiors.

3 Beuroner Kunst, Herder & Company, 1923, Freiburg.

souls for the production of a single great work, but was also convinced that many artists of lesser talent would under a solid and capable guidance accomplish more than they could if left to themselves. Besides, his idea of such a unified school was nothing new; the craftsmen and artists of the Middle Ages were all working in similarly conceived and well-organized guilds in their memorable achievements.

The cataclysm of global war has interfered with the further development of this epochal experiment in the development of a true hieratic art. The future will show what is vital and lasting in it, and will help to purge it of any dross. Since the torch has all but been extinguished in Europe, it is to be hoped that the idea of a sacred art fostered by the continuity possible only in a religious community will not die out but like the unextinguishable spirit of St. Benedict will go hand in hand with the liturgical movement to draw ever more souls to restore all the arts to the service of God.



Sacred Versus Secular Culture

by Graham Carey

THE series of three articles on symbolism, of which this is the last, was begun with the intention of trying to answer finally a common objection to the traditional attitude towards the arts which the Catholic Art Association exists to propagate. "Why is it," we often hear, "that writers in the *C.A.Q.* seem reluctant to use the common vocabulary of contemporary art critics? Why do such terms as 'Art,' 'Culture,' 'Artistic Decoration' seem to be taboo?"

We often hear such objections as this: "I understand that the arts are addressed to the service of human beings, and that those arts in particular which satisfy the mind, as distinct from those which satisfy the body, are what we call the 'Fine Arts.' But what is wrong with that? Granted that we have often been snobbish about the arts that serve the body, is this any reason why we should fly to the other extreme, and be snobbish about the arts that serve our higher faculties? Isn't this just a typical emotional swing of the pendulum from one extreme to its opposite, missing the mean point in one case as completely as in the other?"

Such questions raise issues that are at the very center of the whole "artistic" problem, but it is difficult to discuss the issues and at the same time use the words whose meaning is in question. Words correspond to concepts. How can we discuss the meaning of a certain word when the concept which it evokes in the mind of the speaker is essentially different from the concept attached to that word in the mind of the hearer? This seems to be a large part of our difficulty. Communication depends upon community, and this on unity. We cannot have true communication unless we already have a common agreement or unity as to the meaning of the words we employ. The meanings which are given today to such words as "art," "decoration," "culture" and "ornament" are so different from those the words originally stood for, and the ignorance of the former meanings is so general and complete, that it seems proper to say that this use and this ignorance constitute an epidemic misconception. To dispossess our minds of epidemic misconceptions is no easy task.

The best approach to this task seemed therefore not to attack the words directly, but to get around behind them, so to speak, by a discussion of other things. And so we examined the nature of symbolism itself, and modern degenerate symbols, both as "Superstitions" and as "ornaments." It now remains to sum up the information thus gained, and formulate from it an answer to the original question.

Man is matter and spirit, both real and both good, and each in this life inseparable from the other. Man's normal products—artificial things, works of art—should reflect as far as possible man's nature, and should serve not only his body and his mind, but should serve both together at one and the same

time. It is because the people of traditional societies did not normally make anything of exclusively physical or metaphysical use, that their languages do not possess words for such classes of objects. And our secular society, though feeling the need for such words, has not come nearer to coining them than "functional arts" on the one hand and "fine arts" on the other. But by those who are interested in the unity of the arts, rather than in their diversity, these terms are seldom used, except either as a concession to a degenerate style of thinking and speaking, or as a physician names the diseases he hopes to cure. To employ them otherwise is to emphasize a distinction that should not be emphasized, and to concentrate attention on a pathological, and we hope a passing, phase of artistic activity.

As an example, let us consider Le Corbusier's famous definition of a house as a "machine a habiter." He spoke of the modern disgust at the smell from the decaying bodies of once living architectural symbols. He saw clearly that to be beautiful a house must be perfect, and that to be perfect it must fulfil its functions without the addition to it of anything unreasonable and meaningless. But the only functions that he recognized were material. Had he understood that a house is also a symbol, a statement of belief as to man's place in the universe, a thing with a metaphysical as well as a physical use, he might have said that a house is a machine to live in, and also a support for contemplation, which is the full doctrine on the subject. As it stands, what he said is correct in its assertion—dead members must be amputated lest the whole body die—but incorrect in its omission. From the fully human point of view a house which satisfies the body only is as imperfect as would be a "cosmic house" so impractically designed as to be uninhabitable. But we cannot expect to design and build houses that can satisfy the whole human creature until we become again, both as designers and as indwellers, whole human creatures ourselves.

SACRED AND SECULAR

Thus we can understand the aversion to the consideration of the "mind-serving" arts, or fine arts, as distinct from those that serve man as a whole. But we can put a keener edge on this understanding, perhaps, by a consideration of the distinction between the sacred and secular views of life. In brief, the sacred view of life considers all things in terms of God, and of man's specifically human faculties of intelligence and will; whereas the secular view considers all things in terms of man's lower faculties of sensation and instinct—thrills and sentiments and money as a means thereto. When we speak of the arts serving the body, and the arts serving the mind, the latter is given quite distinct interpretations by those who hold the sacred or the secular view of life.

When the secular-minded or frivolous person thinks of service to the mind, he invariably refers to activities and passivities which are essentially pleasurable. It is the mind that enjoys, and service of it is providing it with enjoyment. Nearly all that is usually referred to as "culture" is in this field—the making, or more often the hearing, of poetry, music and dramatic performances,

the viewing and handling of sculptures, paintings, and other "art objects." To the secular, the service of the mind really means having fun—high class, cultivated, harmless fun.¹

But from the traditional or sacred viewpoint service of the mind is something entirely different. It is true that the mind is served by senses, and sensations and sentiments are mental activities, but the specifically human aspects of the mind are its intelligence and its good will, and in truly human service of the mind the exercise of these must have primacy. In all traditional societies this has been accomplished chiefly by statements of belief regarding man's relationship to the rest of the created universe, and to God; and these expressions of belief have been usually in the form of analogies between simple human things and affairs of everyday life and the highest attainable divine things and affairs. The expression of these analogies is symbolism.

So we have on the one hand the "service of the mind" as a matter of "culture," and expressed in terms of sensation and sentiment. Whether high-brow or low-brow, opera or movies, aesthetic dancing or jitterbugging, Picasso or Little Orphan Annie, the principles are the same. And on the other hand we have it as a matter of "religion"—the binding together of the higher and the lower, and expressed in terms of intelligence and will. Whether high-brow or low-brow, the plowman behind his oxen or the philosopher in his chair, the boy Giotto tending sheep or the man Giotto painting the life of St. Francis, the principles are identical. The frivolous attitude leads to disintegration and death, the serious to integration and life.

So we find that the words "Art," "Culture" and "Decoration" are really equivocal words. Each stands for two entirely different sets of ideas, depending upon whether the user has the sacred or the secular point of view. Let me repeat.

From the sacred point of view a culture is the way in which a particular human group expresses its beliefs as to its relation to the Eternal. "A culture," says Christopher Dawson,² . . . is a spiritual community which owes its unity to common beliefs and a common attitude to life." A common view of man's place in the universe, expressed in a set of symbolic conventions—rites, myths, songs and ornaments—binds people together more firmly than do any ties of occupation, habitation or blood. As Dr. Coomaraswamy has written, "*Culture and religion are hardly distinguishable in normal societies; men are united by both.*"

But the word "culture" does not mean this to the secular mind. It means the enjoyment of exceptionally favored persons, and it is the generous hope of those who would "spread culture" to increase the number of these persons.

1 These two points of view were differentiated in "The Function of Music" in the *Catholic Art Quarterly* for Michaelmas 1942 (Vol. V, No. 3); and also by Eric Gill, in his *Sacred and Secular*, John Stevens, Newport, Rhode Island.

2 *The Age of the Gods*, Sheed & Ward, 1933: p. 22.

"A culture" is a sacred conception—"culture" is a secular one. We do well to distinguish them in our minds, and reflect the distinction in our own language.

Art, from the sacred point of view, is the intellectual power or virtue by means of which artificial things come into existence. The word does not mean the artifacts themselves—material objects—but the immaterial force that causes them to be. As artificial things are innumerable in their variety, there are innumerable arts. Because the arts should serve the whole man, material and immaterial, the sacred point of view discourages the distinction between "Functional Arts" and "Fine Arts," preferring not to put asunder what God has joined together.

The secular mind uses the word to connote those arts, and their products, which are concerned primarily with the gratification of sensations and sentiments.

So "the arts" is usually a sacred conception, and "art" a secular one. And when we classify the arts on broad lines it seems better not to divide them into high-brow and low-brow—as between painting pictures and sawing wood—but into secular and sacred—as between frivolous painting and sawing on the one hand, for money or thrill as ends, and serious painting and sawing on the other, for the good of the work to be done.

And so with "decoration" and "ornament." In their sacred meaning the words stand for adjuncts to useful things essentially symbolic. Decoration is the addition of something that is *decus*—decent, fitting, suitable. Ornament is the fitting of it out with its own proper furnishings, appointments, and whatever it needs to complete it. The words are almost identical.

In their secular meaning the words stand for adjuncts essentially pleasing. To the secular mind it would seem grotesque to speak of books as the decorations of a library, stanchions and forks as the adornments of a cow barn, or anvil, hammer and forge of a blacksmith shop. Suitable and fitting as these things are, they do not appeal sufficiently pleasurably to sense and sentiment, to make them "decorative."

And here again, because the abstract words have developed especially the secular connotations, it is probably better to use when possible the particular forms. There can be no ornament or decoration except of a specific thing. In most cases the particular plural would seem better than the abstract singular.

CITY NAMES

As an example of the gulf that separates the sacred from the secular mind, consider the naming of cities. On the one hand, the founders, being interested in first principles, and dedicating their town to some noble idea, give us such names as Athens, Petrograd, Edmundsbury, Philadelphia, Sacramento or Santa Fe. On the other, the namers being interested in effects rather than causes,

appearances rather than reality, trivialities rather than things *sub specie aeternitatis*, we get such names as Mechanicsville, Rockport, Bellows Falls, Magnitogorsk or Port Sunlight.

What is worse, the secular-minded find it hard to believe that all other minds do not work in the same way as theirs do. And, as Hilaire Belloc has repeatedly warned us, the learned are often the worst offenders, persisting in the fallacy of "reading history backward," explaining past facts as the result of exclusively modern ideas. For example, in reference to the cuneiform ideogram for Ninevah, an authority writes:³ "The archaic form of this character proves that it was compounded of the ideographic picture of a house, enclosing the ideogram of a fish, thus preserving record of the instructive fact that imperial Ninevah was at first, as its name implies (*nun*, "fish", is the name of the fourteenth letter of the Semitic alphabet), a collection of fishermen's huts." This is the typical reaction of the secular mind to sacred matters. We know that the fish was a divine symbol among the ancient Mesopotamians, and may be sure that the thought conveyed by "the house of the fish" was religious, and not the record of a paltry historical accident. One might just as well assert that ancient Heliopolis (City of the Sun) where Plato studied with the Egyptian priests, and where the chronological system that we use today was first worked out, was so named because the sun was very hot there. Or that Florence, instead of having been dedicated to the fertility goddess Flora, was so named because the flowers were numerous and pretty there. Or that Providence was so called because the founding farmers and their wives prided themselves on being good providers. Or that Bethlehem (House of Bread) was originally a collection of bakeshops.

No, traditional or sacred civilizations name cities and people in reference to holy and eternal things, as they understand them. Secular or frivolous civilizations name them in reference to what is accidental and passing. The distinction can be illustrated from so many angles that it is hard to know where to choose.

ORIGIN OF CULTURAL FORMS

Let us return to what was called, in the first article of this series,⁴ the four modes of symbolism—Decoration, Myth, Hymn and Rite—and try to understand these better by pushing still further back into their origins, and thus see even more clearly the contrast between these and their modern secular descendants—Art, Literature, Music and Drama. If we look at what is known of the earliest prehistoric origins, and reasons for being, of these basic human activities, we can understand the extent to which they have been transformed in our own times. In every case they were originally religious.

Art. The earliest existing painting and sculptures were made in the later Paleolithic Age by the people of the Magdalenian Culture, "the first specifically European culture to come into existence."⁵ They are found in the caves

3 Edward Clodd, *The Story of the Alphabet*, New York, 1934; p. 90.

4 *C.A.Q.*, Vol. VII, No. 1, p. 12.

5 Christopher Dawson, *Age of the Gods*, Sheed & Ward, 1933; p. 15.

of the south of France and in the Pyrenees, and are often of excellent workmanship. Primitive men have always shown a keen sense of man's peculiar position in Nature, a sense which secular-minded city dwellers seem to have completely lost. The ancient hunter felt intrusive in and destructive of the orderly natural patterns, and was conscious of the need of apologizing to the forces behind natural manifestations for his intrusion and destructiveness. These primordial Magdalenian paintings and carvings are believed to be an expression of his feeling of the need of propitiating the superhuman powers, and expiating his disturbance of the harmony of the natural order. In any case, Christopher Dawson assures us that,⁶ "We can be certain that the primitive hunter did not create these works of art in the depth of dark and inaccessible caverns for the sake of amusement. Their origin is undoubtedly magical or religious."

Literature and Music. Our remote ancestors were illiterate, and they must often have felt a need—sometimes very strongly—for the recording of traditions. Anthropologists believe that one way in which such perpetration was accomplished was by the periodic recitations or chanting of metrical compositions of words, which were thus learned by heart and passed on from generation to generation. Among sea-faring peoples traditional lore concerning winds and ocean currents; among others, genealogies like those in the Bible, or mythical accounts of the deeds of the gods and actual accounts of the deeds of heroes—anything considered truly memorable—were preserved by the recitation of these chants at stated intervals. Memory was thus preserved of those matters which the people should not forget.

These recitations were sequences of formally patterned sounds. From one point of view the sounds were words—sounds with an intelligible meaning. From another point of view they were notes—sounds with an emotional meaning. From the patterns of intelligible sounds descend our poetry and literary arts, and from the emotional our musical arts. Such singing—poetry and music combined—was part of a serious business, and it was undoubtedly enjoyable, but the enjoyment was not the serious part as it is with us who belong to a secular culture. It but perfected the operation of something done for an end other than enjoyment.⁷

Drama. Illiterate primitive man had another way of preserving the memory of what he deemed memorable. He could not only describe deeds in chanted words, but he could re-act the deeds themselves. These reenactments or representations of ancient deeds, performed ritually at regular intervals, were the means of keeping the memory of those deeds and of their meaning alive, and are the origin of our own dramatic performances. They were doubtless often enjoyable and enjoyed, but enjoyment was not their purpose. Indeed, the intention of these dramas was so different from what we understand today, that it is difficult to explain it. Primitive acting was a religious mystery, a means by which space and time were really to be overcome and what once had been again brought to be. It was not, as with us, the projection of

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁷ See N. K. Chadwick, *Poetry and Prophecy*, Cambridge University Press, 1942.

something with an appearance suggestive of the appearance of the fact to be remembered, and therefore capable of arousing in the spectator emotions similar to those aroused by the original fact. It aimed at actually recreating an essence. The words "re-en-act" and "re-pre-sent" indicate this. To reenact is to bring something again out of the emptiness of potency into the fullness of actual being. To represent a thing is to make its being again near both in time and space. (*Prae*—near, *sens*—shortened form of *essens*—being, *re*—again; present means to be near in space, as in "all present," and in time, as in "the present tense.")

The supreme example of this ancient idea is, of course, the Catholic Mass, the purpose of which is to make Christ's sacrifice exist again as truly as it formerly existed. The Mass represents the Last Supper and the Passion in the traditional and sacred meaning of the word "represent." In the secular and degenerate meaning, the Mass does not represent the happenings of Maunday Thursday and Good Friday at all, because the appearance of the Passion and death of Christ and the appearance of the Mass are entirely different. Symbols do not represent accidental appearances, but actual essences. So, in the Mass, we say that we have the Real Presense, i.e., the thing itself,⁸ again made to be in our own place and time. The thing itself (*res*), in our own place and time (*prae*) made to be (*essens*). It is hard for us to appreciate the Mass unless we understand this ancient idea of representation as a reaching back into the past, and a recreating of what once happened there in the *now*.

This is what we mean when we say that our modern "cultural forms"—painting, sculpture, poetry, music and the drama—the purpose of which is recreational, are the direct descendents of analogous activities whose purpose was religious. And this is true not only of remote and primitive, but of any traditional societies, and of our own Catholic tradition as well as those of the pagans. The modern secularized city, with its art museum, its library, its concert hall and its theatre, is the descendent of the ancient sacred city with its temple or its church. We have separated what was once a single activity into four, and housed the four parts under four separate roofs. We can hardly understand the true interrelationships among our "cultural forms" until we trace them back to their common origins in religion.⁹

8 Real—*realis*, adjectival form of *res*—thing.

9 Why is it that when a thing degenerates it usually disintegrates? A formal cause is that which determines or constitutes a thing in its own kind (*genius*)—a daffodil, a frog, a pencil, or a statue. To the extent that this formal principle is active, it must therefore also maintain the thing in its own kind. It keeps the daffodil or statue from turning into something else.

Degeneration is a falling away, a lapse, from kind, and therefore it implies a weakening of the formal principle that would prevent that lapse. Disintegration is a falling apart, a dismemberment, a separation of the integers of a thing, its parts or its materials.

The formal principle of a traditional society, that which makes it fully human, is religion, or the serious or religious attitude of mind. When that principle weakens we get two results—degeneration and disintegration. The traditional society lapses from its kind, turns into something else, a secular society. And the unity and integrity of that society breaks up into disunity—disintegrates. Unified religious practice becomes fragmented, and what were once but aspects of a single worship become separate "cultural activities." As in the case of the death of an animal body the unifying principle being gone, the materials are free to arrange themselves into new patterns.

CONCLUSION

I hope that it is not necessary to say that it is not the purpose of these three papers to insinuate either that all was well with all ancient and primitive peoples and all wrong with us, or that one religion is as true as another.

All was not well with all ancient and primitive peoples. Some of these (notably those with which our "ancient history" concerns itself) were definitely secular in their outlook on life, and paid the inevitable price of their secularism. In every culture it seems likely that some secularism could be found. When ancient and primitive cultures were normal and healthy it was because they applied intelligence and good will to the religious truth of which they were possessed. Some religions contain more and some less truth, and those people are more normal and happy who understand and apply the truths that have been revealed to them, than those who have been given a greater talent but made less use of it. Thus we need not be surprised to find, nor ashamed to admit, that many non-Christian societies are as normal and full of health, as many Catholic societies are abnormal and degenerate. On considering the nature of man, this should be obvious.

What I do want to emphasize is this. There is nothing to be gained in denying that our Western culture is intellectually degenerate. The "progressive" elements in Western civilization, Catholic and non-Catholic, have become almost completely secular. We no longer apply to the details of our everyday lives the wisdom to which we are the heirs. We do not base our thinking upon what we know to be true concerning man's nature and his relation to God.

In nothing is this clearer than in our thoughts about such matters as the arts, cultures, and symbolism. Man is normally both active and contemplative, to fulfil himself he must not only make a living in the physical world, but he must contemplate truth. By symbolic expression the normal man of the normal culture achieves both these necessities at once. In one conventional act he can satisfy the needs of his material and of his spiritual nature. Symbolism is the bridge.

"Adam sinned," says Maritain,¹⁰ "because he fell away from contemplation; thence forward divisions came upon mankind. To turn away from Wisdom and form contemplation, and to aim lower than God, is for a Christian civilization the primary cause of every disorder."

All contemplatives are not locked up in cloisters. Contemplatives are those men and women who seek wisdom, and to this seeking all the physical paraphernalia of life are but a necessary means. "To contemplation, then," says St. Thomas,¹¹ "all other human activities are ordained, as to their end.

¹⁰ *Art et Scholastique*: translated by Rev. John O'Connor and published as *The Philosophy of Art*, by St. Dominic's Press, Ditchling, Sussex, 1923: p. 124.

¹¹ *Sum. Cont. Gent.*, Lib. III, cap. 37, 6.

For integrity of body, to which all artificial things necessary to life are ordered, is requisite to the perfection of contemplation. And an inner quiet from the disturbances of the passions is necessary, achieved through prudence and the moral virtues, as well as quiet from outer disturbances, to insure which the whole structure of civil life is arranged. So that rightly considered all the functions of human life are seen to be at the service of those who contemplate the Truth."

There can be no hope of reforming the arts, of establishing social justice, of putting an end to wars, unless we resolve to root out of ourselves that secularism which is the cause of our ills. We cannot expect to be happy, even in this world, unless we are willing to seek that Wisdom of which Philosophy is the Love.



DA versus CAA

ART APPRECIATION, WHERE ART THOU?

"That proverbial better rat trap and the path that leads to its maker's door may attract the average citizen, but not the hand weaver. Why? I think the answer is this: the interested weaver knows that looking at *others* weaving and talking about weaving will never make one a better weaver. It may satisfy curiosity. It may even give one the impetus to try and I'm not denying the value of this, but the way to learn to weave is to weave, as the way to learn to walk is to walk.

No! Art or the appreciation of art is not won by a cursory glance. The weaver who gads about has little in the end to gad about. Throughout my years of weaving I have had bishops, a vicar general, monsignori, many priests and sisters, innumerable lay people call on me to see my work. Among them all, nary a dyed-in-the-wool hand weaver."

* * * * *

AS ONE DA TO ANOTHER DA

An Easter DA asks a Christmas DA to be more specific about the term, "school art", now being loosely applied to any self-expression or development of skills at grade school level. Even a DA cannot invent names for things successfully but he can question the correctness of a name's implication. Art, in this *Quarterly* at least, has meant a mature expression by a mature intellect, one trained in the rectitude of judgment necessary to right making. It seems some other word with less power and force in it must be used to cover childish struggles in unnatural media be they ever so honest and spontaneous. Skills must be developed, the will must be directed, and the intellect must grow into art by means of expression in many forms but it isn't a question at grade level so much *what* is produced as *how* it is done. The "pressure" must be applied toward mastering simple skills extremely well. On this foundation there will be hope for an art expression when the mind is ready but it is wishful thinking to call art that soil upon which art may only rest. Let the willing till the soil but call not the soil the harvest."

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ECHOES FROM A REGIONAL MEETING

"I enjoyed the paper but was disappointed in the response. As Mr.—— put it, you stepped on a lot of dead feet. If that was a typical C.A.A. response



no wonder it takes so long to awaken outsiders. If the leaders don't have initiative, how can others be expected to fall in line. From the looks of things 'taint only craftsmanship that will take a hundred years to develop.

On the other hand I can more readily appreciate those who are *doing* something. "It's coming but you can't rush it", as Ade used to say. Also I can appreciate what even one good response like Father———'s means. It saves me from giving up hope."

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ANOTHER ECHO

"My first C.A.A. meeting was a surprise and a disappointment. I attended the one in———this year expecting to find a group of keenly interested people receptive to new ideas. Instead they seemed to be completely asleep or, it isn't a happy thought, with minds closed to what they chose to ignore. At any rate, they listened to the speakers and then in discussions went happily off on tangents in no way related to the theme and purpose of the meeting."

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AND ANOTHER

"We seculars are hungry for direction in putting a religious value back into our daily living. As an artist I was encouraged and happy to see the promise of a meeting concerned with Art and Prayer. Is it too strong to say I was scandalized to find those professing a life of prayer shying away into credit talk and book-mark ads rather than sticking to a consideration of prayer?"

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NON-OBJECTIVE

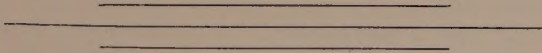
"As art critic I must be pretty low on the social register because I still claim to know what I like. I realized I was this way by my negative reaction to the art department announcement card released recently by C.U. I'm assuming that you've seen it and will appreciate my description. It compels attention with a quasi-non-objective sort of "Now you see me: now you don't" thing by way of illustration. Being quasi-non-objective it tempts you to guess why the objectivity was non. You end up, anyhow, with a snaky thing (which may be paint from the tube though there's no tube) coiled coyly in and out between a supine Washington Monument and an a not-so-supine Capitol dome. The snake crawls into a long building marked—for your sake and mine—"art dept." Something must happen to the snake in there because what comes out at the other end of the building is snaky in a different way. Other spots are more non-objective, I guess, because I don't identify them so well. I'm sure this is one of those samples of pure technique or something "ultimate" beyond ordinary comprehension since it comes as a symbol of C.U. Such an art department could hardly have a point in striking a pose—even an "arty" pose—

with such a solid heritage to draw from for its drawing. But, being no art critic in the first place, I can relent a little and admit that the illustration may be entirely honest after all for in the outline of the courses offered there is no faint indication of any Catholic objective such as you and I are dreaming will some day be found in a Catholic university somewhere."

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PROPHETICAL

"I am anxious to discuss with you the reality of adult education in all these matters. We are doing a lot of "prophetical" work, but the ordinary ministry whereby things are made vital among the people is suffering from neglect. The obvious is being slurred over and thus the real becomes unreal and *visa versa*. There is way too much wilfulness and arbitrariness in much that is done."



WHO'S WHO

The Rev. Paul Hanly Furfey is a professor of the School of Social Science at the Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C. "Since art is the right way of making things," argues the author of "Art and Machines," "and since some things are made *rightly* with machines, the product (of a machine) can be a work of art." Before you decide this is far-fetched read on what the author has to say in defense of the new age in art.

"The Formal Cause" also begins with a definition of art. *Sister M. Matthias, O. P.*, of St. Patrick's High School of Imogene, Iowa, is the writer of this scholarly article on the formal cause of art. She is most interested in the *apostolate* of the arts. Right now she is working in a rural community where she hopes to "build up the worth" of the land by creative work.

"Sacred Versus Secular Culture" by *Graham Carey* is the third and last of his series of articles on Symbolism. Those who have looked forward to the author's concluding remarks on Decoration as a mode of symbolism will not be disappointed in the manner of dealing with questions often raised by those who misunderstand basic terms.

"Monte Cassino and the Reform of Sacred Art" was contributed by the *Rev. Anthony Unterhofer, O.S.B.*, a refugee priest from Austria and the Nazis. He is an art instructor at St. John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota. With the memory of the destruction of Monte Cassino and the death of Brother Clement still fresh in his mind, Father Anthony very gently bids for a reconsideration of the works of "Beuronese" artists, especially that which can be found here in America, to a great extent the work of the late Brother Clement.

C. A. A. NEWS

FOR the second time in two years the C.A.Q. found itself without an editor when the Rev. Dunstan Tucker, O.S.B., left St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota, to enter active service as a chaplain in the U.S. navy on May 10. Father Dunstan brought to his task as editor the same enthusiasm that had always characterized him as a professor of literature. He worked diligently to raise the literary excellence of *The Catholic Art Quarterly* and to keep its illustrations on a correspondingly high level. He merits a big THANK YOU from all who feel as we do that he has done much for our *Quarterly*.

☞ Father Angelo Zankl, O.S.B., wishes to announce that he has, with much difficulty succeeded in acquiring a new editor for the CAQ. He is the Rev. Edwin Kron, C.S.P., of Old St. Mary's, 911 South Wabash, Chicago, Illinois. Father Kron has been a member of the C.A.A. since his seminary days, and is very much interested in his new job. He will begin his work with the Michaelmas issue.

☞ When the National Catholic Rural Life Conference chose as its motto, *Keep Them Plowing*, to assure America's victory in the war, Sr. Helene was asked to make an appropriate symbol. The result has been judged most satisfactory by those who have seen the poster. St. Isidore, patron of plowmen, is depicted doing the work of three farmers because he is being aided by two angels.

☞ Miss Ann Grill, Instructor in ecclesiastical design at the Art Institute of Chicago, has given a series of lectures on *Christian Art:*

Architecture and conducted the *Christian Art Workshop* of the Sheil School of Social Studies at Chicago. We are proud of her as a CAA member.

☞ A meeting of the Central Region was held at Alvernia High School on April 10. The theme of the conference was "Art and the Prayer Life." Sister Jane Catherine, O.S.U., of Mary Manse College, Toledo was general chairman and the main address was delivered by the Reverend James Killgalen of St. Mary's of the Lake Seminary at Mundelein, Illinois. There were discussion sessions open to professional and collegiate, secondary, and elementary levels of interest. Speakers for these group meetings were: Sister Helene, O.P., Adrian, Michigan; Sister M. Denis, O.S.F., Aurora, Illinois; and Miss Ann H. Grill, Chicago. Group Chairmen were: Sister M. Thomasita, O.S.F., Milwaukee, Sister M. Louis, S.S.N.D.; and Mr. Melville P. Steinfels, Chicago.

During the business meeting at the close of the conference, Sister M. Helena, O.S.F. of Alvernia High School was elected director of the Central Region. An unusually fine exhibit of student and membership work was assembled for this meeting.

☞ Mr. Frederic Whitaker of Providence, Rhode Island, long-time member of the Association and nationally known water-colorist, is preparing a book in that field. Mr. Whitaker was for many years a designer of ecclesiastical pieces for Tiffany, New York and later developed a business of his own in religious articles as a protest against the ugliness too prevalent in that line of goods.

